

# Comprehensive Guidelines for Food Recovery Programs

## Executive Summary

Food recovery programs collect foods from commercial production and distribution channels and redistribute them to people in need.

With bipartisan support, Congress passed the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act in 1996. The Act is designed to encourage the donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations such as homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and churches for distribution to hungry individuals. The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act promotes food recovery by limiting the liability of donors to instances of gross negligence or intentional misconduct. There is a government-wide effort to encourage and support food recovery programs.

In this land of plenty, where tons of edible food are discarded as waste, there are millions of hungry children, elderly people, working poor and homeless people, who look to surplus food and food recovery programs to provide for this most basic of human needs. As more people became interested in food rescue activities, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and others received requests for uniform guidance to assist regulators and food recovery program managers in ensuring safe food practices.

In response to an Issue submitted in 1998, the Conference for Food Protection tasked a Committee to develop guidelines for food recovery programs. This Food Recovery Committee was composed of representatives from hunger relief organizations, retail food industry, a consumer advocacy organization, and federal, state, and local regulatory agencies.

In an earlier joint project, USDA and FDA had developed a food recovery guidance document that subsequently was turned over to the Committee for its use. Using this document and material developed by the hunger-relief organizations, the Committee developed a document which it entitled *Comprehensive Guidelines for Food Recovery Programs (Guidelines)*.

The *Guidelines* are intended to provide guidance to those who want to participate in food recovery programs as donors and receiving operations as well as to those who oversee standards compliance as regulators or peer inspectors.

There is a brief history of the food recovery efforts in the United States by private organizations and the early and current work of the lead federal agency for food recovery, the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The *Guidelines* give advice on implementing a food recovery program, various ways to contribute to food recovery programs, choosing suitable partners, and laying the foundation for a successful program. This includes food safety provisions in alignment with the FDA Food Code, guidelines for monitoring food recovery programs, and handling of donations of game animals.

For simple recordkeeping, the *Guidelines* contain sample forms designed to facilitate the management of a variety of aspects of food recovery programs. The following are provided:

- an initial meeting of the partners form (to assist the donor and food distribution organization in sharing information about their mutual expectations);
- a participants agreement form;
- a record of shipment and receipt of donated food form (to increase accountability and for trace-back purposes if needed);
- a kitchen monitoring report form;
- a food bank warehouse inspection form;
- a food bank salvage operation inspection form; and
- a chart to aid in assessing donated food upon receipt.

References such as publications and web sites are listed for further information.

The diverse readership of the FDA Food Code makes it an ideal vehicle to disseminate information about the purpose and worth of such programs to the benefit of the many stakeholders. For in-depth information, see the *Comprehensive Guidelines for Food Recovery Programs* available via the FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition website at [www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov).

#### WEB SITES

1. Comprehensive Guidelines for Food Recovery Programs  
[www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov)
2. Congressional Hunger Center  
[logos.ghn.org/chc/index.html](http://logos.ghn.org/chc/index.html)
3. America's Second Harvest  
[www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org)
4. Share Our Strength  
[www.strength.org/home.html](http://www.strength.org/home.html)
5. St. Mary's Food Bank  
[www.smfb.org](http://www.smfb.org)
6. The Chef and the Child Foundation  
[www.acfcchefs.org](http://www.acfcchefs.org)
7. USDA Gleaning and Food Recovery Home Page  
[www.fns.usda.gov/fns/menu/whatsnew/gleaning/recover.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/menu/whatsnew/gleaning/recover.htm)
8. World Hunger Year  
[Worldhungeryear.org/why.htm](http://Worldhungeryear.org/why.htm)